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MANIFESTO

OF THE

National Executive Committee of the Socialist Labor Party.

ISSUED AT NEW YORK, SEPTEMBER 21, 1889.

In placing before the members of the Socialist Labor Party and the public a resume of the events which have recently taken place, and of the high-handed outrages committed against the Party and its servants whose duties towards the Party have always been their first consideration, the National Executive Committee ask a careful consideration of the facts presented, and expect of all Socialists a loyal adherence to the laws, the agreements they have made with one another through the guardian medium of democracy, the referendum.

Differences of opinion in relation to proper party tactics existed between the present opponents years ago. On the one side were those who believed that the Socialist Party should be an educational, propagandistic, and at the same time, independent political party, while on the other side were those who, while they pretended to agree with the educational and propagandistic features, persistently opposed the clean and uncompromising political tactics insisted upon by the former. What little interest they took in the party organization was exemplified only in their endeavors to use the Sections to carry out their own schemes under the cover of "advancing the labor movement." A rehearsal of the attempts and failures of these adventurous "statesmen" will not be amiss here, as it may serve to explain subsequent manoeuvres.

AMONG LABOR ORGANIZATIONS.

Sensationalism was the main feature of the tactics adopted by the so-called leaders of the socialists in New York during the period of their ascendancy, beginning with the time of the formation of the Central Labor Union. The honest and sensible agitation among the labor organizations carried on by the members of the German Section was handicapped by the antagonistic attitude of the "leaders" who made themselves "prominent" by their peace-destroying tactics and their interference with the trades unions. And it was not long before dissensions arose in the Central Labor Union. Instead of using the Socialist Labor Party as a political party separate from all entangling alliances, they began the work of disunion by attempting to use the unions for purposes for which they were not fitted by the very nature of their organization, being composed of workmen holding all manner of political opinions. As soon as one political party attempted to manipulate the unions it was only a natural sequence that the other political parties who had enthusiastic partisans among the memberships would do the same; and thus arose the dissensions among the trades unionists which eventually resulted in open antagonism and the organization of rival "central bodies." Had the "leaders" possessed the necessary knowledge, they would have known that such dire results would follow their destructive tactics, and they would have known also that political organization is one thing and trades organization is another; the former being adapted for political agitation and action, and the latter for the immediate protection of its members from the aggressions of capitalists and "masters" under the present system. Need we mention in detail every instance, of which the Cigar-maker's troubles, and the animosities of the Knights of Labor are prominent, in which a few "leaders" brought the Socialist Party into disrepute and created an antagonism against it from which it has never fully recovered? These "leaders," not even masters of the language of the country, having no knowledge of the laws under which all citizens must pattern their conduct, whether they understand them or not, presumed to take a "leading" position, and the ridicule which they so well deserved individually was also cast upon our Party of which they were unfortunately members. Had the Socialists of New York not allowed themselves to be deceived by the prevaricating reports of these "missionaries" they would not be in the unenviable position they are to-day.

POLITICAL ATTEMPTS AND POLITICAL ALLIES.

The evil effects of attempting to reconcile the clean-cut and scientific axioms of the Socialist Party as presented in their Platform with the half-way measures and temporary expedients of local and merely temporary political organizations partaking of the character of bull-dozing committees, has been plainly exemplified in the "United Labor Party" bubble which burst of its own inflation. Here again unsocialistic practices were adopted, such as the wildest glorification of an individual, Henry George. If these "leaders" had had the qualifications of socialists they would have been careful to regard socialist axioms first, regardless of sensational campaigning which could at most only be the prelude to a reaction. To the honor of the more practical among New York's Socialists of that day be it said that their activity and reasonable agitation at least brought some good men into the Party who received their first impulse from the George movement. Not one of these, to our knowledge, has any degree of confidence in the "leaders" of those times. One of them is a

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member of the National Executive Committee to-day, and his criticisms of the "leaders" have caused them to condemn him without the courtesy of a hearing. Then came the revenge campaign of the "Progressive Labor Party" which died a natural death when its revenge was complete. The Socialist Sections were "led" into this also, but many members were more careful of the Party's honor, and to-day these men are the upholders of the Party Constitution.

What remains? A number of factions whose main arguments against each others' right to existence are calling bad names and billingsgate. There are among the Trades Unions bitterly opposing factions, unions against unions, and among the "labor parties" we find the "Georgites," the "United Labor Party," the "Union Labor Party," each of them more or less the tool of one or other of the capitalist parties, whose managers use the factions and their "leaders," and pay them what they think is necessary and heartily despise them into the bargain.

OUR PARTY'S POLITICAL ACTION.

Those of the members of the Socialist Party who attended the Congress at Buffalo, in 1887, will recall the discussions which took place there touching upon the attitude of the "leaders" in New York City. On the side of the present party tactics as expressed in the resolution adopted by the referendum vote last December, were Comrades Rosenberg, Walther, Fabian, of New York, Geo. Metzler, of Philadelphia, and others; while Alexander Jonas, Paul Grottkau and others voiced the sentiments of those who would make of our Party a mere society for "propaganda," as they call it, through the medium of speeches and pamphlets, etc. Nay, more than this: the discussion included also a consideration of the tactics already practised by local sections, and among them were those of New York, St. Louis and Indianapolis. A strong feeling was manifested in favor of independent political action, and it was the undoubted opinion of the large majority of the delegates that the alliances of Socialists in New York and other places with other political parties were detrimental to our propaganda, as well as tending to cast suspicion upon our Party. Comrades Walther and Fabian vigorously denounced the course the *Volkzeitung* and its followers and owners had taken with regard to the promotion of the *Progressive Labor Party*. It appeared that after the humiliation of the Socialists at the Syracuse Convention, which humiliation was the direct result of political trickery of Mr. Schewitsch and his immediate followers, as well as of the followers of Henry George, a meeting was called in New York at Webster Hall. Previous to this a strong effort was made by Walther and Rosenberg to elevate the S. L. P. in New York above the petty disputes which had brought it into disrepute as before recorded, by proposing independent political action as the *Socialist Labor Party*. At the Webster Hall convention the straight-out Socialist delegates, Walther, Fabian and Rosenberg were defeated; and the individuals who were foremost in denouncing and ridiculing their propositions were Hugo Vogt, Schewitsch, Jablonski, Block, and R. J. Hinton. The spokesman for the Socialists was Walther. Fabian asked the privilege of expressing himself in German (at that time he could not speak English very well, though he was far ahead of his opponents in his comprehension of American ideas), but he was denied the privilege by the meeting, and the very ones that were opposed and most vehemently spoke against granting the reasonable request of our Comrade were the same ones who have been and are now placing obstacles in the way of straight-out socialist politics. This is the manner in which these people have assisted in making socialist propaganda. They play the trades union sentiment against the Socialists and they play the word socialist against the trades unionists. Is it any wonder that the labor organizations hold the socialists in low esteem? Is it any wonder that they are afraid of socialist papers and the contemptible ending of the *Leader* where their money was squandered and where at last both advertising and news columns were at the disposal of New York ward politicians of the lower order? Both Schewitsch and Hinton denied responsibility for publishing such matter, but if the editor and his assistant are not responsible, they should be able to say who is. This is the element which your Executive has had to contend with all along, and for a time they were successful. But the unscrupulous enemy was not thus to be repulsed. A defeat upon the floor of the Section and Branch Meetings through sound reasoning must needs be avenged. Truth could not do it, and so

SECRET SLANDER WAS EMPLOYED.

It was whispered around that the members of the Executive Committee were incompetent; that they were dishonest; that the Editor of "Der Sozialist" was guilty of drinking "pool beer" (this was calculated to rouse the ire of the brewers, who have for the editor of their trade paper Karl Ibsen). Finally a long list of charges were made and published by the German Section. So ridiculous were these charges that when Schewitsch and Jonas saw them they immediately decided that they would not do, and they were laid aside, and it is alleged that other charges were drawn up. What these were may only be surmised from the published accounts made by the *Volkzeitung* and surreptitiously placed in the "Workers' Advocate" by the conspirators after the outrage of forcibly ejecting the Party's officers and the editors of the Party journals from their offices. Many attempts were made to find out what the Executive was charged with, but to no avail. Slander, underhand and cunningly spread among the honest and well-meaning members of the party in New York, was doing its work, and the characters of the members of the Executive were being undermined.

WHO ARE THE CONSPIRATORS?

One can hardly enumerate among the dastardly conspirators all the ignorant and belligerent dupes of the "leaders." It is plain enough to us that the stand taken by the "*Volkzeitung*" people all along is a sure clue to the perpetrators of the present *coup d'etat*: Alexander Jonas has already identified himself with the conspiracy, and with characteristic shrewdness has gone to Europe after seeing his work of ruin accomplished. On one former occasion of strife he adopted the same cowardly course. Schewitsch has also plainly shown himself in the present affair, and has identified himself with the anarchistic cabal. Their interest in the supremacy of the "*Volkzeitung*" is the very material one that it furnishes them with considerably more salary than they could get elsewhere. Ibsen, a machinist by trade, is editor of the *Braver-Zeitung*. We believe he was once a good agitator. Syracuse Section may furnish details of his history in this country.

Ibsen had an eye on the editorial chair of "Der Sozialist," but the very small salary which the party pays its editor was rather chilly. Kirchner, who once agreed with the party tactics (or pretended to) has one son in the employ of the "Volkszeitung" and another in the employ of the "Brauer-Zeitung." Kirchner is also a member of the "Volkszeitung" publishing association, and does not understand the English language. Gretsche worked in a small laundry—he is benefitted by even the low salary of the National Secretary whose place he presumes to occupy. He can write neither English nor German correctly, and speaks it very brokenly. Meyer, the treasurer was found fault with by Secretary Hintze and others some time ago for alleged overcharges for carpenter work done at head-quarters, and ever since he has shown great animosity towards our secretary personally. Praast is an old opponent of the present party policy, is unable to understand the language of this country, and has hardly any knowledge of the people or politics of America. He too is a "Volkszeitung" owner. Jablonski, who presided at the disorderly Clarendon Hall meeting is the President of the "Volkszeitung" Board of Directors, and Hugh Vogt, who acted as vice-chairman is their semi-legal adviser—he is not yet a lawyer. Opposition which has been instigated in Brooklyn can also be traced to the "Volkszeitung" employees, owners and hangers on. The source of the conspiracy is pretty well located, and it only requires an insight into the "labor movement" in New York and a knowledge of past political alliances to know why the National Executive Committee has had this element to contend with.

THE CULMINATION.

Then came the notorious "joint meeting" at Clarendon Hall, expressly called, as per notice, for the "Legal Investigation of the complaint against the National Executive Committee." How the meeting was officered by "Volkszeitung" employees and officers; how they refused to even have the alleged charges against the Executive read or presented; how they boldly and in defiance of all law proceeded to elect four of the conspirators to take the place of the lawful committee; how the protests of the American Section were jeered at; how the defenders of the law were interrupted and insulted; and how, finally the American Section withdrew from the meeting amid the wildest confusion and under threats of personal violence, has all been published in the *Workmen's Advocate* of Sept. 14th and in circulars already sent out by us. The utterly illegal and unconstitutional proceedings of the German and Jewish sections, and the rightful authority to act of the National Executive Committee has been publicly and repeatedly recognized by the Board of Supervision, and they have made their decisions to that effect. FROM THESE DECISIONS THERE IS BUT ONE APPEAL TO THE PARTY. The Board of Supervision cannot be appealed to from their own decision. They cannot appeal to themselves from their own decision. That is the privilege of the Party only. We are informed that such illegal appeal has been made, and that the Board of Supervision has listened to such appeal and made another decision instead of submitting such appeal (see Constitution IV B. of S., 2, c.).

In view of all the facts recited; in view of the necessity for a speedy and thorough investigation and settlement of all the questions involved, and in the interest of our noble cause, we urge every member to uphold the law as it at present exists, and expect that all Sections will send representatives to the Congress which will take place at Chicago, beginning on Saturday, September 28th, at 1 P. M., according to the call already mailed to all Sections. If any Section cannot afford to send a delegate from their own Section they have the privilege (Constitution II, 2) of sending proxy delegates, and the Sections of Chicago have announced themselves ready to provide such.

The property of the Party is in the hands of the enemy. Notwithstanding the fact that the Board of Supervision has announced that they have suspended both the National Executive (which according to their own decision they could not legally do) and the so-called National Executive, the property of the Party still remains in the hands of the usurpers. Our Party journals, the *Workmen's Advocate* and *Der Sozialist* are still in the hands of the appointees of the usurpers, and will be used by them to spread falsehood and attacks upon us and our editors who have proved themselves faithful and loyal servants of our party for years.

These conditions demand speedy and thorough rectification, and that can be done through the Congress and the succeeding referendum.

Act promptly, rigidly adhere to the Constitution, and you will advance the Party's interests and rid it of anarchistic and unlawful elements.

Fraternally yours,

THE NATIONAL EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE.

W. L. ROSENBERG,
W. HINTZE,

AD. GERECKE,
JOH. SAUTER.

P. S.—All moneys received since their unlawful and forcible ejection, and all accounts of the National Executive Committee with the Party and its members will be handed over to the Congress at Chicago, September 28, for examination and verification. Until the Congress has published further information, we advise all Sections to withhold all payments. The National Executive Committee will not be responsible for moneys sent to 25 East Fourth Street.